



The Ames Intelligencer

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Consolidation Of Rural Schools

by Farwell T. Brown

The Milford Township Consolidated School, located in the center of Milford Township northeast of Ames, became a part of the Nevada system in the fall of 1961. Prior to then, it had operated as a consolidated district for 41 years. But by fall of 1991, the Milford School building will no longer be used by the Nevada school system. New school facilities in town will be completed, and Milford School will be abandoned. No plans for the "old" Milford building have been announced.

In May 1990, a reunion was held at the school with more than 300 graduates, former teachers, and friends, most of them from the "old" consolidated school days, in attendance. The reunion marked the passing into nostalgic memory of another of our consolidated schools once so prominent in rural Iowa.

There were people back in the 1920s who called consolidated schools "consolidated fools." At the time, such sentiments may have had some foundation, but there were few available alternatives. The

one-room school was the center of community life. Every four-mile area had its schoolhouse where most farm families had direct ties. But paved roads arrived, along with radio and changing transportation systems. Farm production methods began to change radically. Education was forced to change to meet new needs. Schools changed. And consolidation was a new word. The one-room schoolhouse disappeared from the landscape.

The movement to consolidate Iowa's public schools began slowly after 1896. By 1923, consolidated school districts in Story County had been established. However, these small districts were slowly absorbed into the larger consolidated districts. The original districts did not in-

clude some of the rural one-room school districts.

In 1902, there were 129 one-room schools in Story County. In most areas, there was a one-room school located in every four-square mile area, although townships where towns were located maintained fewer one-room schools. In 1935-36, 23 one-room schools remained in Story County. In 1946-47, the number fell to six, and, in 1952-53, only one remained.

Many people argued in favor of consolidation. Increasing populations, improved transportation systems, the desire for more complete curricula (especially vocational agriculture and industrial courses), specially trained teachers, and better sanitation facilities were all good

The Fernald Consolidated School was established in 1908. Note the use of the bobsled as a school bus, a common practice for early consolidated schools during Iowa's winters. This photograph was taken from the 1914 Story County atlas.



reasons for consolidation. On the other hand, distance from home and "too much time away from home" were common objections to consolidation. Despite these objections, horse-drawn buses became the standard method to transport consolidated school pupils. By the middle to late 1920s, motorized transportation was common.

Fernald, organized in 1908, was the first school consolidation in Story County. It appears as the only consolidation in the county in the 1910-12 State Superintendent of Public Instruction's report. Earlier, in 1904, there had been only 35 consolidations in all of Iowa, with 17 of those reported as "temporary." However, the movement accelerated in central Iowa during the years of World War I. In 1917, the state Legislature passed laws detailing procedures for consolidation. Incentives were provided under the new laws, but the process became more complicated.

In some instances, small independent school districts, already established in the smaller towns, became consolidated schools. This was accomplished either by "tuitioning in" or annexing nearby rural school districts. This was the case in Gilbert. Gilbert voted to consolidate on February 5, 1917 when the vote in town was 51 in favor and 4 opposed to consolidation. The vote outside the town was 90 in favor and 28 opposed. The Gilbert consolidation was contested in court by

a group of rural residents excluded from the proposed consolidation. On August 10, 1917, a Story County district judge sided with the plaintiffs in the case, but on July 31, 1918 the Iowa Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision, allowing the consolidation to be completed. The Gilbert case influenced future consolidation procedures throughout Iowa.

Today, the movement towards more centralized public education has continued under the wording of "school reorganization." Fernald, the first district in Story County to consolidate, was also one of the first to further readjust when, in 1960, it joined the Nevada school system. In 1962, Fernald School was closed, and the former Fernald school district was divided between Nevada and Colo.

Three other country school districts - Milford, North Grant, and Shipley - ceased independent operation by 1961. North Grant became part of the Ames system, and the other two districts were absorbed by Nevada. North Grant and Shipley schools closed. North Grant is now owned by the Ames Baptist Church and is operated as a private school, while the Shipley School building became the headquarters for the Ghen Corporation, U.S.A., an agricultural products marketing operation in Japan. The Iowa Farmer's Union state headquarters now occupy a part of the Shipley building.

In 1969, Story City and Roland combined to become today's Roland-Story school district. Huxley, Slater, Kelley, and Cambridge now comprise the Ballard school district. More recently, the Maxwell and Collins schools combined, while Zearing and McCallsburg have combined into the NESCO district and have entered into a sharing arrangement with Colo. The reasons for reorganization today remain about the same as they were for consolidation in the 1920s. To the list of changes in rural Iowa has been added a decreasing farm and small town population, complicating the economics of school operations. As evidence, the ratio of the number of high schools in the county to local communities has been significantly reduced.

The one-room school had many advantages in its day. The consolidated school, likewise, made major contributions to the life of our rural communities. It was thought to be the vital center of the social and economic existence of the areas in which they were located. Interest in local school athletics is indicative of the strength of local schools. New gymnasiums were built on to consolidated school buildings three decades ago to help stabilize the very presence of the schools. But despite these efforts, changing technologies far removed from the local community are changing lifestyles and loyalties in Iowa's small towns.



Remember riding in a horse-drawn school bus? Gilbert's horse-drawn buses lined up on the road in front of the school building on November 11, 1920. Ralph Miller, an Ames resident today, drove the bus on the left. Roy Templeton and Selma (Hanson) Parlow were two of the other drivers at the time. Mud roads and drifting snow were common hazards, but there wasn't much auto traffic then. In the mid-1920s, motorized buses were acquired.

Bauge Home Project Update

The Board of Directors of the Ames Heritage Association received a number of reports concerning the Bauge Log Home restoration project during the past few months. Some of the highlights of these reports are included here.

The search for \$6,000 to fund the reconstruction of the lean-to on the north side of the house, as well as the replacement of doors and windows and addition of shutters for protection, received a boost during the summer. In June 1990, the Ames Heritage Association was pleased to be awarded \$2,000 from the National Questors Grant Program and \$100 from the Iowa Questors Grant Program. A fund-raising letter was mailed to selected individuals in the community who responded generously.

To date, more than \$5,800 has been contributed to allow Falls Millwork Company under the direction of Ben Svec and Dennis Dobson to rebuild the lean-to and re-roof the entire structure before winter. This work entails construction of a concrete flooring foundation, replacement of the flooring deck, reconstruction of the lean-to walls and roof rafters, and re-roofing the building.

Funding is still needed for reproduction of the doors and windows, placement of stone facing on the foundation, and stabilization of the loft floor and back wall of the main structure. We appreciate the donations from supportive individuals and organizations, and we encourage others to give their financial support for this project by sending checks to the Ames Heritage Association.

Members of the Neta Snook Questors Chapter spent more than 400 hours constructing a log cabin quilt to be used in the restored house. Members of the Neta Snook, Old Oaken Bucket, and other local



Questors groups continue to be very supportive of the Bauge project, and future projects include help sewing appropriate items, white-washing walls, researching furnishings, serving as guides, and providing refreshments for special events at the site. Ames Heritage Association members appreciate this interest and support.

Programs and open houses at the Bauge home have attracted more than 400 people and a number of small groups have made special appointments to visit the site. A policy for visiting the log home has been developed. Contact the McFarland Park office of the Story County Conservation Board at 515/232-2516 for a copy of the access policy.

The Story County Conservation Board has also hosted field trips for county school children at the home and site. And the Bauge House has been the subject of a number of newspaper articles during the past few months. These information and educational activities have attracted a great deal of local interest in the restoration project. A number of private organizations and clubs have received tours and programs related to the project.

Finally, thanks to Ann Watts for her dedication to this project - from baking cookies and hosting the open houses to developing an inventory system to keep track of donations to working on the fund-raising cookbook and informational booklets. From the beginning, this project has brought together dozens of people in the spirit of cooperation and dedication. Ann Watts is just one of those people fascinated by the vision of preserving this important living piece of local history.

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The Ames Heritage Association meets the third Monday of every month (September through May) at 7:00 p.m. at the Willson-Beardshear School, 920 Carroll, Ames.

The annual membership meeting is held the third Monday of January. Time and place are announced in advanced.

The *Ames Intelligencer* is published three times a year-winter, spring, and fall.



Notes

- The Board of Directors of the Ames Heritage Association extends its deepest sympathy to Herb Hatch on the death of his wife, Miriam, this summer. Herb is a longtime supporter of AHA and is a former board member.

- Two Ames teachers recently recognized for excellence in teaching have strong ties to the Ames Heritage Association. Shelly Boyd, a math teacher at Fellows School, has been extremely supportive of the AHA's Hoggett School project, including fundraising. Suzanne Kelly, a science teacher at Meeker School, serves as a member of the Board of Directors and membership committee. Congratulations to Shelly and Suzanne!

- The Ames Heritage Association recently received recognition from the Ames Historic Preservation Commission for "significant achievement" in organizing the "Faces of Our Founders" exhibit in celebration of Ames' 125th anniversary. The AHA was congratulated for its efforts in promoting public awareness of historical preservation.

- The receipt of a \$4,874 grant will assist the Ames Public Library in making Farwell Brown's historical photograph collection accessible to the public. Farwell donated his extensive holdings to the library in 1987. The grant, awarded jointly to the Ames Heritage Association and the public library, was made pos-

sible by the Iowa State Historical Society through the new Historical Resources Development Program.

The ISU Photo Service is making two 8x10 prints for every unique negative. When cataloging is complete, approximately 4,000 prints will have been made. Librarian Janet Klaus is preparing the catalog, providing multiple subject headings for each photograph. This work will continue throughout the winter, with the unveiling of the completed collection scheduled for spring. Farwell is assisting with descriptions of each image. Historical research of all kinds will be greatly aided by this impressive gathering of visual information about Ames' past.

It's Time to Renew!

It's time to renew your membership in the Ames Heritage Association! We ask that you continue to support the association and its efforts to preserve the heritage of our community.

Projects during the past year have included research on Ames heritage for the newsletter; restoration of the Bauge log home; contributions to the Ames' founding fathers exhibit; maintenance of Hoggatt School and its educational programs; support for the development of the Old Town Historic District; and continued efforts in involving others in the preservation of our Ames heritage. Dues for 1991 have been set as follows:

Life Membership	\$1,000.00
Sustaining Membership	100.00
Business/Organization Membership	30.00
Regular Membership	12.00
Senior Citizen or Student Membership	8.00

If you have already paid for 1991, thank you! Dues cards will be available at the annual meeting on January 21, 1991 at the Ames Public Library. Gift memberships to friends and relatives are also available. Please contact members of the Board of Directors of the Ames Heritage Association for more information. And thank you!

Please enroll me as a 1991 member of the AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION.

Name

Address

Phone Number

Type of Membership:

☐ Regular (\$12.00)

☐ Business and Organization (\$30.00)

☐ Senior or Student (\$8.00)

☐ Sustaining (\$100.00)

☐ Life (\$1,000.00)

Please make checks payable to AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION and mail to Ames Heritage Association, P.O. Box 821, Ames, Iowa 50010. Thank you!



History Displayed at City Hall
Remember to stop and see portions of the Ames history exhibit, "Faces of our Founders," displayed at the Ames City Hall. The exhibit will be changed each month according to the following schedule:

November 1990

F.E. Morris, Lynn Morris, S.J. Starr

December 1990

The Groves; Ames and College Railway (the Dinkey)

January 1991

The Adams Family

February 1991

The Munn Family

March 1991

Views of Ames (1865-1907)

April 1991

Billy Sunday



This 1918-20 photograph shows the new Gilbert Consolidated School building designed for high school students. This building, after undergoing remodeling through the years, will be replaced by new construction underway at this time.

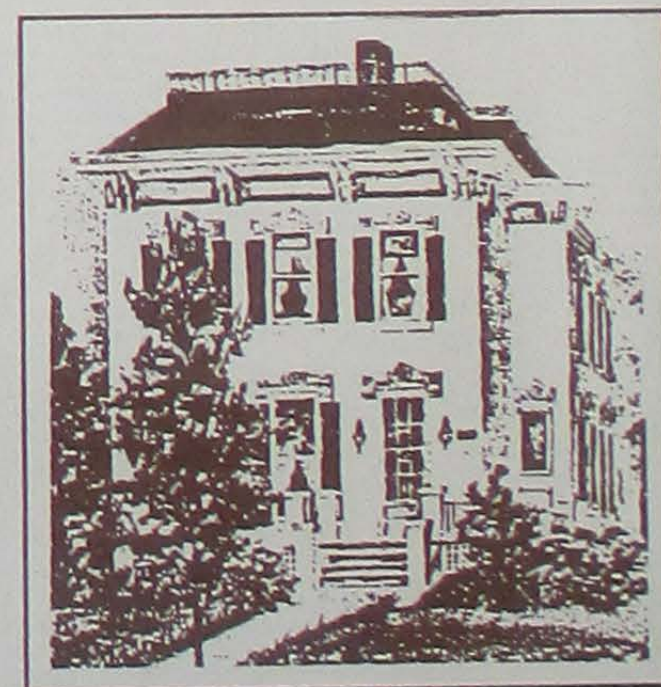


Memorial Tree Planted

In honor of Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrated in April 1990, Ames Heritage Association board member Polly Gossard planted a serviceberry tree at Hoggatt School on the grounds of Meeker School in Ames. Polly planted the tree in memory of her husband, Thomas L. Gossard, grandson of Sarah Emery Gossard, who served as the first teacher at Hoggatt School in 1860. Assisting in the tree planting are Everett Ritland on the left, retired principal of Ames High School, and Glenn Connor on the right, principal of Meeker School.

Historical Survey Planned

The City of Ames plans to survey the historical resources of the city during the upcoming year. The survey will inventory buildings within the city that are at least 50 years old in order to assist Ames officials in assessing local historical resources and making better planning decisions. The newly-established Historical Preservation Commission, supported by the Ames Heritage Association, suggested the idea for the historical survey to the Ames City Council. For more information about the historical survey, contact AHA board member Sharon Wirth.





From meetings of the Board of Directors of the Ames Heritage Association:

- Reports by Treasurer Nancy Ezarski indicating a balance of \$2,231.51 in the general fund and \$5,868.23 in the Bauge project fund as of August 1990, including income from membership dues, interest, Bauge House and Hoggatt School donations, sales of historical calendars, and grant funds from the Ames Community Arts Council and national and local Questors groups;
- Reports concerning Hoggatt School, including the open house sponsored in May 1990 in celebration of National Historic Preservation Week and attended by more than 70 people, the need for assessment and recommendations concerning the prairie planting, and recent and pending repair work;
- Reports concerning the Billy Sunday cemetery marker, including receipt of \$200 from the Ames Community Arts Council and approval of the wording: the plaque

will be mounted in stone and displayed at the North Grand Mall in November 1990 in the Arts Council case and at the City Hall in April 1991 prior to placement at the Sunday family cemetery;

-Set the date for the annual meeting on Tuesday, January 21, 1991 at 7:00 p.m. at the Ames Public Library;

-Report concerning AHA participation in the dedication of the new City Hall in April 1990 with the theme of the 125th anniversary of Ames;

-Reviewed and discussed the committee structure and projects;

-Approved bylaws changes;

-Approved a grant application to the Ames Community Arts Council for funding for publication of the "Faces of our Founders" booklet about Ames' early founders;

-Drafted a site inventory application for the Public Safety Building at 5th and Kellogg, citing the historical and architectural significance of the building, to be reviewed

by state historical society staff to determine eligibility for listing on the National Historic Registry; AHA is also seeking designation for the building as a local landmark by the City of Ames;

-Purchased equipment to assist Farwell Brown in his oral history project; volunteers are needed to transcribe oral histories already recorded; contact Farwell Brown for more information and to volunteer your services;

-Accepted the resignations of board member Rose Rollenhagen and treasurer Nancy Ezarski and appointed Ann Watts as board member to replace Rose as board member; AHA requests the services of someone to serve as treasurer of the association; contact Kathy Svec to volunteer for this important position. Thanks to Rose and Nancy for their service and support, and welcome to Ann Watts for volunteering. Ann has volunteered hundreds of hours in support of the Bauge Home project.

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